



Her passion project

Sarah Teres

Ricki Lake

talks about

“The Business of Being Born”

The new documentary film “The Business of Being Born” will premiere in New York January 9, 2008. Please see our website for local listings. Ricki Lake, the executive producer of the film, kindly agreed to speak with *Motherwords* Magazine about the film, and the follow-up book from Grand Central Publishing, which is scheduled for release in the Spring of 2009.

Mw: Elaborate a bit on your birth experience. You said in the film that your first birth left you feeling cheated. What happened specifically, and how did that lead you to finding the information for alternatives?

Ricki Lake: It was really just luck of the draw. I ended up having a hospital birth for my first child, and for the most part it was great. I had a long labor, and in the end, I was induced and had an epidural. All in all it was a beautiful birth experience but I wanted more information and felt I had not experienced the birth I could have had. I happened to meet some women who had extremely positive birth experiences, and hearing these positive stories led me toward the midwifery model of care. I became really passionate about seeking out information and was shocked by what I didn't know. I decided to make this film because I wanted it to serve as the kind of positive story I had which led me to research my birth choices. I want this film to be that positive story for women, to keep them open to the idea of transformation. Every birth is a transformation, but a positive birth experience can be extremely empowering.

Mw: What were some of the biggest hurdles to getting the film made?

Ricki Lake: Opinions are so very strong when it comes to birthing choices, so I would say that the biggest hurdle was keeping everything balanced. It was really important to us when we were making the film that we did not judge anyone. We wanted to present options and choices without the fear of judgment. We

want people to be open to information without anyone getting defensive.

Mw: How do you think we get women to take back their power in their birthing experiences?

Ricki Lake: Education is key. Getting the information to women so they can make informed choices is also extremely important. Shedding light on positive birth experiences, showing women a great (birth) story—put the message out there to want the connection with birth.

Mw: Why do you think women are so reluctant to find out about birth choices? Why do they stay on the “conveyor belt of hospital birth”?

Ricki Lake: I think it is due to fear around birth from the media and everywhere. Stereotypes about labor and birth often have a negative message. There is a lot of misinformation out there. Many women don't question, and for the most part, people go where they are comfortable despite the outcomes. There needs to be a release from the fear of birth.

Mw: Why do you feel this film can change what birth advocates for so long could not?

Ricki Lake: Because film makes the information more accessible for women on a large scale. It has now become a critical time to get information out there because so many countries follow the lead of the U.S..

Mw: What is your reaction to the idea that the film will be marginalized?

Ricki Lake: Well, so far that's not happening. People are embracing this film and seem to be excited to get the information. The film has been promoted on a grass roots, word-of-mouth campaign by women who are interested in getting the information out there.

Mw: What's happening in the birth industry right now seems to me to be a type of violence against women, so where is the moral fury?

Ricki Lake: Well, we really want the film to be eye-opening for people, and we just want women to continue to raise questions after they see it. Hopefully as questions are raised people will advocate for informed choices and change.

Mw: Women have a tough time believing statistics. How do they get informed?

Ricki Lake: Change the vision of the stereotypes. Get them to see beyond the stereotypes, beyond the fear. Show them the positive stories, the beautiful births, and alleviate the negative impact of fear.

Mw: What do you feel are the next steps after making this film? What now?

Ricki Lake: I hope the information is more accessible for people. I want "The Business of Being Born" to be a crossover film (like "An Inconvenient Truth"), to raise awareness and promote advocacy of birth choices. I feel this is truly my passion in life and I am thrilled to be able to advocate for women and children. In September of 2007, I moderated a U.N. panel on maternal and fetal mortality rates and helped with the launch of the Deliver Now* campaign. It was a great experience, and I hope to be able to more panels and conferences in the future.

I have a book coming out as a follow-up to the film because there were so many topics and a lot of information we couldn't cover in the film. The book will be available in 2009, and the hope is it will help dispel some of the fear-based rhetoric surrounding childbirth, inspiring women to enjoy the birthing experience. I believe so strongly in this because I have such a strong connection to this issue.

Mw: Thank you so much for your time, we really appreciate your talking with *Motherwords* today!

Ricki Lake: You are so welcome! Good luck with the magazine!

*Deliver Now for Women & Children is a new global campaign to reduce maternal and child deaths. The Deliver Now campaign will draw the world's attention to the more than ten million deaths of women and children, which occur each year, mainly in developing nations. Most of these deaths can be prevented through greater political commitment, increased investment in health services, and support for communities to demand better access to quality health care. For more information please go to: <http://www.who.int/pmnch/activities/delivernow/en/>

Ricki lake sells book about natural childbirth

Lake adds author to her credits with a new book based on her critically-acclaimed documentary, "The Business of Being Born"

Los Angeles, CA (November 28, 2007)— Actress, media personality and activist Ricki Lake has sold a book about natural childbirth and the healthcare industry in the United States to Wellness Central/Grand Central Publishing. The untitled book will be Lake's second collaboration with co-author Abby Epstein, director of the pair's critically-acclaimed documentary "The Business of Being Born." The book is scheduled for release Spring 2009.

As a practical guide to natural childbirth, the book will examine many of the issues addressed in the film. Hailed as the "Al Gore of natural births" by New York Magazine, Lake decided to adapt the film into a book after receiving a bevy of questions about natural birth from women who saw the documentary in its early social action screenings.

"As women learn about different birthing options and their many effects, they are apt to make informed birthing choices," said Lake. "This book will provide women with clear information about natural birth, help dispel some of the fear-based rhetoric surrounding childbirth, and inspire women to enjoy the birthing experience."

"The Business of Being Born" will be released in select cities beginning January 9, 2008 by Netflix's Red Envelope Entertainment. Netflix will release the film on Video on Demand with New Line Home Entertainment handling the DVD release.

Andrea Barzvi at ICM negotiated the deal on behalf of Lake and Epstein.

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COMING TO THEATRES 1/9/08

Sarah Teres



The Business of Being Born

I do not remember the first documentary I ever saw. I am fairly certain it was a Marty Stouffer production, invariably about some kind of animal species. I am sure I was thrilled to see it, having exhausted the morning cartoon line-up just to keep the warm, blue rays aglow.

For the most part, until Michael Moore's "Roger and Me" premiered in 1989, documentaries were a learning vehicle, often boring and devoid of controversy. Moore gave new life to the documentary, and people have been lining up on either side of the political fence ever since. I admit that I like documentaries and generally feel more educated after watching one.

I recently had the privilege to see an advance screening of "The Business of Being Born," a documentary from Executive Producer Ricki Lake and Director Abby Epstein, which will premiere in New York City, on January 9, 2008.

I was not initially interested in seeing this documentary for many reasons. One being that due to my own work as a birth advocate, I fancy myself somewhat of an expert on the subject of birth. I didn't think watching a film I felt certain I could have directed myself would be very educational.

I was also unsure that the host of a show which began every episode blaring "Go Ricki" for eleven years could speak to me about birth. How could someone who had introduced "you think

you all that" to the American lexicon bring positive information about the crisis of birth in America to the masses?

Hearing the chant of "Go Ricki" in my head as the title credit rolled, I was thrilled to be wrong. "The Business of Being Born" is a film everyone in America needs to see.

Many of the reviews I had read of the film, before actually seeing it, focused nearly exclusively on the perceived "one-sided" aspect of homebirth, Ricki Lake's recent weight loss (which, by the way, is not part of the film) and the "yuck" factor many reviewers mentioned about seeing women giving birth. To all of those critics, I say, "You didn't get it". To all the potential audience members I say, "I hope you do".

The film presents a balanced, factual history of birth in America from the early 1900's to what is happening in the present day.

It opens with Manhattan midwife, Cara Muhlhahn, prepping a bag in order to attend a home birth. Apparently it was lost on many reviewers that while preparing the bag, Cara packs an oxygen tank, surgical instruments, and syringes, as many reviewers still seem to have the idea that home birth means "unprepared" birth.

From the first scene of Cara prepping a bag, the film interviews a variety of women and men, asking them about their perceptions of birth. Many of the women respond that they would not

consider a midwife, liked the idea of a hospital birth, and some described a scheduled cesarean section as the best way to go because it is an easy "one, two, three." One man says, "I think of home birth as having a baby in a barn."

The film does not shy away from statistics, facts about childbirth in the U.S. and the many reasons birth in America is in serious crisis. Some of the factors mentioned in the film are the impact of malpractice premiums, insurance companies, as well as cultural indoctrination of American women from television, movies and celebrity endorsements.

In addition to the birth experts, midwives, scholars, and journalists featured in the film, many medical doctors are interviewed and it is shocking what some of them have to say. I was pleasantly surprised at how balanced the film remained even after detailing several un-medicated births. Taxicab deliveries notwithstanding, every type of birth is examined without judgment or castigation. Despite the focus of the film, which is to educate people about what is happening in the world of American birth, the film presents facts about birth choices, urging women to become informed about the pros and cons of the choices they make. One common thread of criticism I have read is that the

...some described a scheduled cesarean section as the best way to go because it is an easy "one, two, three."

film is heavily supportive of natural birth. This is an incorrect assessment. There is no heavy-handed preaching about home birth. The tenor of the film urges women to keep an open mind about what they know, or think they know, about birth. This is especially poignant in an unexpected birth complication toward the end of the film, which was probably as much a surprise to Ricki Lake and Abby Epstein as it will be to anyone watching the film.

"The Business of Being Born" has the potential to educate people about the American birth industry in a way no other film has to date. The film is a great introduction to the way in which women are negatively impacted every day by misinformation or lack of information presented by medical personnel. This film is a call to arms for every woman in America even if they have never given birth. The way in which "An Inconvenient Truth" was a wake up call about the environment and global warming, "The Business of Being Born" is a siren sound about how women are treated in the medical community. It is my great hope that women see this film and are called to action by getting informed about their birth choices and refusing to accept what they thought they knew for sure in blind faith.

After watching the film, I still have the "Go Ricki" chant in my head—but now I really mean it.

25 things

every mother should know...

1. How to change crib sheets and a diaper without waking a sleeping child.
2. What poison ivy looks like
3. www.sittercity.com - This is a great site for finding college-age or older sitters and nannies if the neighborhood teen-agers aren't working out. Find out who can cook and do light housekeeping. See profiles and reviews of sitters, do background checks, search by your ZIP code. You will be amazed.
4. Baby wipes take stains out of carpeting just as well as "stain remover." Scary, but true.
5. A pair of scissors is a lifesaver when faced with the up-the-back-and-around-the-neck poop explosion. You do not want to deal with the ramifications of pulling that onesie over your child's face. Trust me.
6. The Baby Einstein videos not only stimulate your child and introduce them to the beauty of classical music, they give you just enough time for a shower and blow-dry.
7. A neighbor who will watch your kids in an emergency.
8. Your kids will notice that you are arguing with your husband before you do.
9. If you notice your child focusing on an area of your face, you need to brace yourself to hear about a pimple, enlarged pore, or stray hair.
10. If you're feeling proud that your child has finally had a nice big lunch, look for the rest of it somewhere else.
11. Boudreaux's Butt Paste—need I say more?
12. Whoever cleans it up, gets the bug next.
13. Where the restrooms are in every store, farm and restaurant they visit with kids.
14. What not to wear when children are eating chocolate.
15. Always carry infant Tylenol.
16. Always carry a camera. Those Kodak moments wait for no mom!
17. Jiffy Lube vacuums for free.
18. Grandma's Secret Spot Remover™. 'Cause not ALL markers are water-based.
19. There is no such thing as a supermom. We all have our shortcomings.
20. Where all your husband's financial assets are just in case he falls down the stairs, accidentally of course.
21. Keep bucket in the car. Just in case.
22. A reliable handyman if your husband isn't so handy.
23. If you find something gross, set it free. Before they make a pet out of it.
24. How your children spend their time and with whom.
25. How very you are to be a mom.